

## House Republican Press Release

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### LEGISLATURE APPROVES INITIATIVE INTRODUCED BY REP. WINKLER, SEN. PRAGUE TO ENACT STATE OVERSIGHT OF HOMECARE INDUSTRY



#### *Southeastern Connecticut Incidents Illustrate Need For Legislation*

On Wednesday, May 03, the State Senate gave final legislative approval to an initiative introduced by **State Rep. Lenny Winkler, R-Groton**, and **State Sen. Edith Prague, D-Columbia**, that would establish state oversight of companies that provide homemaker or companion services. The initiative is contained in House Bill 5846, which now goes to Governor M. Jodi Rell for final approval.

HB 5846 would require companies providing homemaker or companion services to obtain a certificate of registration from the Department of Consumer Protection (DCP). It also gives the DCP commissioner authority to suspend, revoke, or refuse to issue the certificate of registration or take other disciplinary measures in response to violations of the bill.

Under the bill, beginning October 2006, these agencies must require new employees to undergo comprehensive background checks and take specified factors into account when making employment decisions based on the checks.

“There have been several incidents in Southeastern Connecticut that demonstrate the need for oversight of this industry,” said **Rep. Winkler**. “Many elderly residents are vulnerable to being taken advantage of and this bill marks good start toward protecting their interests.”

“With passage of this legislation, through the background check and a volunteer disclosure form, we’ll determine if prospective employees were ever convicted of a crime involving violence or dishonesty anywhere in Connecticut, or in any other state for that matter, or disciplined by a comparable licensing agency in any other state,” **Senator Prague** said. “It’s our obligation to do everything we can to protect the elderly and their families while they’re working on sensitive issues to secure appropriate care for their loved ones.”

Under HB 5846, homecare agencies must provide their clients with written individualized contracts or service plans that identify the services' scope, type, frequency,

and duration. It would also require that agencies enter into a contract with a client's family that detail exact services and compensation. They must also make their records accessible to DCP. The agency would also be required to report back to the Legislature within one year on its new oversight. The bill makes it a Class B misdemeanor to provide such services without being registered or to make certain misrepresentations.